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9 April 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM:

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Member, Senior Review Panel

SUBJECT: A Review of Intelligence Performance in
Afghanistan

REFERENCE: Memo for SRP from the DCI, dated 19 December
1983, Subject: "Report on a Study of
Intelligence Judgments Preceding Significant
Historical Failures: The Hazards of Single-
Outcome Forecasting" (ER 83-6093)

This is in response to your memorandum of 19 December 1983
directing further research on the performance of the Intelligence
Community with respect to the massive Soviet intervention in
Afghanistan in December 1979.

In answer to your specific question, "Did (the Intelligence
Community) speculate the Soviets were going to control
Afghanistan?".

In March 1978 an Intelligence Memorandum, "The Afghan
Successors," discussed the potential replacements for Daoud
Khan. The thrust of the paper anticipated a palace-type coup
with one or another of the ruling elite taking over the
government. There was no mention of a role for the Communist
Party, nor either of its two competing factions. No individual
mentioned in the memo actually acquired a position of leadership
in the April revolution a month later.

Once the communist seizure of power had become a reality,
the Community produced a series of excellent reports. The first,
a biographic research paper published in June 1978, "Leaders of
the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan," analyzed the results of
the April revolt, traced the development of the communist threat,
detailed the events which occurred during the seizure of power,

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described the backgrounds of the members of the cabinet and provided pictures and biographies of four of the leading officials.

In July 1978, an IIM, "Afghanistan: Orientation and Policies of the Taraki Government," stated:

The Soviets near term aim was to solidify the new government's control of the country and the expanded Soviet presence in Afghanistan-- both steps to insure against any backsliding in the bilateral relationship. Over the long term the Soviets will seek to guide the new regime in the implementation of domestic and foreign policies compatible with those of the USSR.

At about this time there emerged a running dialectic within the Agency which was to continue with gradually diminishing intensity until December 1979. The discussion centered on the estimate, "Would the Soviets intervene massively with Soviet ground forces?".

- One group, the Soviet political analysts, generally held to the view that although the Soviets had the capability, it was counterproductive for them to intervene with ground troops and they would recoil from making such an irrational decision.
- A second group, the analysts specializing in Afghan affairs, detected the growing deterioration of the social and political fabric of Afghanistan and concluded the Soviets could not tolerate this kind of disorder for a variety of compelling reasons.
- A third group, the analysts who studied the Soviet military, held the view that the military could see advantages as well as disadvantages to military intervention and would certainly not oppose a political decision to go in.

The turning point in the debate probably occurred in early September 1979. The Office of Imagery Analysis had identified what it considered was a Soviet airborne battalion at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. The Office of Soviet Analysis did not accept this identification and considered the evidence inconclusive. It is my understanding that the DCI, Admiral Turner, was briefed and approved a finding of "tentative" until such time as the unit identification could be corroborated

by some other means, such as HUMINT or SIGINT. However, Admiral Turner on 14 September 1979 sent a memorandum to the NSC stating in part, "Small Soviet combat units may already have arrived in country." On 20 September 1979, a memo for the record written by Admiral Turner of a conversation with Dr. Brzezinski indicates he urged that a Presidential Review Committee discuss US reaction in the event of a Soviet move into Afghanistan.

The various intelligence publications chronicled the events as they unfolded in a professional manner. The collection problems the community faced were severe. Both the Russian and Afghan societies are by nature and tradition secretive and conspiratorial. In addition, Afghanistan is contiguous to the Soviet Union and far from our normal commercial or political centers of activity.

There was a logical basis to the estimate that the disadvantages to the Soviets of massive intervention would be large and enduring, and so they have proved to be. The misjudgment was that the Soviets would place the same value on the factors that we did. Afghanistan was by no means an intelligence failure. The community gave an excellent performance with the single exception of its reluctance to accept the likelihood of massive intervention. No policymaker in the US Government should have been surprised when the actual cross-border operation began in late December.

In the attachment I have traced the series of events which led up to the massive Soviet cross border operation in considerable detail and cross referenced the intelligence judgments that were adopted at the time.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is a tale of complicated intrigue and treachery in which two societies, the Russian and the Afghan, have added more chapters to an old, but unfinished, murder mystery.



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Attachment

SUBJECT: A Review of Intelligence Performance in Afghanistan

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ATTACHMENT

9 April 1984

A Review of Intelligence Performance in Afghanistan

Lt. General William J. McCaffrey, USA (Retd)
Member, Senior Review Panel

The series of events which culminated in the late December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the corresponding intelligence judgments adopted by the Intelligence Community at the time make a very intricate and convoluted story. To understand these events and how they were interpreted by the Community, it is necessary to start with Russian history.

Russia has been an expansionist state since the Dukes of Muscovy started the empire in the 15th century. Russia has conquered and subjugated neighboring states throughout the intervening years. Fueled by the messianic zeal of true believers, and based on the dogmas of international communism, the Russians have vastly expanded their empire over the past 50 years. Recently their methods have grown more subtle and more sophisticated, but world domination remains the ultimate Soviet objective. Therefore, on the basis of history, there should have been a reasonable presumption that, faced with a power vacuum in a contiguous territory, the Russians would fill it. I suggest many of the intelligence judgments reflected a reluctance to face this stark reality.

After the October Revolution, the Soviets had attempted to set up communes in Afghan-claimed territory. These were short lived. Because the Soviets were preoccupied with internal problems until after their recovery from World War II, they pursued a policy of "benign neglect" with respect to Afghanistan.

However, in 1956 they began to provide financial aid to the Afghans. In 1965 the Afghan Communist Party (PDPA) was established which splintered in 1967 into two factions, Parcham and Khalq.

In 1973 Mohammed Daoud for the second time took over power in Afghanistan. Daoud visited Moscow in February 1977 and signed a third treaty of neutrality and friendship with the Soviets. At the same time the Soviets were attempting to heal the breach between the two indigenous communist groups within Afghanistan. This was accomplished by June 1977.

As a revealing sidelight on US misjudgments of Afghanistan, on 16 March 1978, US Ambassador Dubs, appearing before the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, stated: "Internally, the political situation is stable." A month later in April 1978, President Daoud was assassinated and Nur Mohammad Taraki assumed the Presidency. In October 1980, Ambassador Dubs was killed by guards of the New Republic ostensibly seeking to free him from a hostage situation.

In contrast to Ambassador Dubs' impression of Afghan stability, an Intelligence Memorandum dated 3 March 1978 discussed a developing struggle for succession to Daoud that was beginning to surface. None of the individuals who were identified in the paper as possible successors emerged in a position of power a month later. Neither the PDPA nor its two factions were mentioned. The paper stated: "The USSR has a heavy political and economic investment in the country, but Moscow will probably allow the Afghans to settle their own affairs."

Early Assessments

The DCI's notes of 20 and 30 March 1979 from a briefing he delivered to the President and a few key aides reflect that he painted a balanced picture of our intelligence capabilities to monitor events in Afghanistan, laid out the elements of the situation as it existed, and discussed the probable reactions of Iran and Pakistan.

His discussion of Soviet options seemed to rule out an increase in advisory personnel to operate the new, more sophisticated equipment, but he speculated the Soviets could introduce an airborne division or commit Turkestan Military District forces to combat along the border and in Afghanistan.

He then covered the pros and cons of each course of action from the Soviet view and concluded he could not predict how such a debate by the members of the Politburo on the matter would be decided.

In June 1978, a month after the bloody coup in which Daoud was assassinated, the National Foreign Assessment Center published a Biographic Research Paper entitled "Leaders of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan." This paper identified the principal players in the recent events, traced the origins of the revolution, and identified 13 of the members of the cabinet as founding or very early members either of the PDPA, or of its Khalq or Parcham factions.

The paper stated, "The exact nature of its (Afghanistan's) relationship with the USSR, however, may not be discernible for some time." The study speculated the Afghans might opt for a status as a Soviet Republic incorporated into the Soviet Union, or they might convert Afghanistan into an Asian Yugoslavia, or the PDPA might wish to create a uniquely Afghan version of a communist state.

I am unable to recall a precedent wherein the Soviets have peacefully and voluntarily accepted the elimination of a communist orientation from a nation in which they have seized power.

In July 1978, an Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, "Afghanistan Orientation and Policies of the Taraki Government," was published. This paper acknowledged that the Taraki government was much more closely oriented toward the USSR than were previous regimes. It qualified this conclusion by stating: "The new government will attempt to preserve Afghanistan's basic independence from Moscow, but it is not clear that it will be able to control the growth of Soviet influence in the country."

At the time of publication the Agency disclaimed that it had developed any evidence that the USSR was directly involved in the coup against the Daoud regime. Cui bono. Circumstantially, considering the growth of the Soviet presence, the size of the embassy, the presence of advisers throughout the Afghan government and in all military units, the statement might well have pointed out the unlikelihood that such an operation could be mounted without Soviet connivance and support.

The July 1978 paper provided a short biographical sketch of Hafizullah Amin, the Vice Prime Minister, but did not mention his May visit to Moscow, nor did it reflect the growing number of indications of a power shift within the ruling regime. By this time it should have been evident that the Khalq faction appeared to have won the first round. In early July Kabul newspapers and public records indicated that the leaders of the Parcham faction were being sent abroad to diplomatic posts. However, it can be reasonably surmised that the Soviets were finding Taraki unsatisfactory and that they agreed to back Amin during his Moscow visit in May. The Soviets were also warming up Babrak and his Parcham followers as an additional entry into the leadership sweepstakes should Taraki and/or Amin stumble.

An Intelligence Assessment published in December 1978 stands out as a common sense and realistic analysis of the then existing situation. The paper accurately highlighted the growing power of Foreign Minister Amin and succinctly laid out the weakness of the

regime and relationships between the various factions contending for power. The paper also accurately identified the trends which culminated in Taroki's subsequent overthrow. It called the turn on the change in the role of the Soviet military advisers and on the reorganization of the Police Service.

The Road to Intervention

The uprising in Herat in mid-March 1979 was a significant milestone on the road to intervention. In this incident a popular eruption of resentment against the local Afghan officials either was started, or was soon supported by, the local Afghan army garrison and quickly turned into a blood bath. Possibly as many as 100 Soviet men, women, and children were brutally butchered as the mobs vented their ancient hostility on their Russian neighbors; 3,000 to 5,000 Afghans were estimated to have died before the loyal troops, brought in from Candahar, were able to restore order.

The reactions to this uprising, both by the Afghan regime and the Soviets, intensified the forces which inexorably led the Soviets to conclude later that a massive invasion with ground combat troops was their only satisfactory course of action.

--On the Afghan side, the government failed to recognize the uprising as a signal that their tactics were non-productive and were alienating their own people. Instead of pursuing a more moderate course, Amin took over direct responsibility for the government from Taraki on 27 March 1979 and proceeded to tighten the screws.

--The Soviets moved in hundreds, perhaps thousands, of additional personnel. Tanks, armored personnel carriers, and helicopter gunships were flown in to Kabul on 26 and 27 March 1979. In April 1979 the Soviets sent the women and children home, in effect clearing the decks for action.

A paper prepared in the Office of Political Analysis in April 1979 appraised the cooperation among rebel groups, estimated that the prospects for success of these groups were dim, and acknowledged that the possibility of massive Soviet intervention, as in Hungary, could not be completely discounted. Here, I think the integrity of the intelligence process was validated. The warning flag was raised. In the penultimate paragraph the paper speculated on the return of the Parchamists headed by Babrak Karmal. In the final paragraph the conclusion was presented that the change of government would probably occur as a result of a military coup and that if installed quickly the USSR would probably have no choice but to accept the new regime.

Inasmuch as the Soviets manifestly had the capability to intervene, this conclusion implies that the Soviets would not take whatever measures were necessary to install a government compatible with their interests. This judgment was short of the mark.

To further indicate the essential integrity of the Agency's performance, on 2 May 1979 a Special Report was sent to the President covering various potential world trouble spots. Afghanistan led the list (which included South Africa, Cuba, NATO, Italy and Spain.) The memo stated: "There is no Community consensus as to whether the Soviets would in fact introduce ground combat forces in Afghanistan to maintain the Taraki government in power, should this ultimately prove necessary." The issue was surfaced for the President's information, despite the continuing disagreement within the Community.

A follow-on Special Report to the President on 5 June 1979 advised that the Soviet dilemma was worsening, the situation was deteriorating, and Soviet assistance had not reversed the trend. Again the Report reflected the differing views in the Community:

Partly because our evidence continues to be inadequate, views differ as to how close is the critical point when the Soviets will have to decide whether or not to intervene with combat forces. Some analysts, however, consider it quite possible that a sharp collapse could occur unexpectedly during the coming month which would make it impossible for the Soviets to defer such a decision.

This statement was probably accurate in that a series of visits, inspections, reinforcements, plots, pressures, assassinations and so forth followed during the ensuing months as the Soviets sought by every means at their disposal to cap the volcano that was emerging in Afghanistan. In addition to being difficult as friends and subordinates, the Afghans were proving to be incompatible as communists.

An 11 June 1979 Intelligence Assessment which focused on Afghanistan's relations with its neighbors reflected a good grasp of the factors driving the turmoil but failed to highlight the shift in power from Taraki to Amin.

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A Regime Besieged

On 15 July 1979 the National Foreign Assessment Center published "Afghanistan: A Regime Besieged." This paper identified Amin as the heir apparent of Taraki, who was considered to be in poor health. It discussed the progress of the insurgents and the deterioration of Afghan control over the country.

The paper interestingly outlined Soviet disinformation efforts to conceal their patron-client relationship and estimated that it was difficult to assess how deeply the Soviets were involved in shaping Afghan domestic and foreign policy decisions. The writer considered that Taraki still appeared to be making key decisions, some of which had met with Soviet disapproval. The paper speculated that the Soviets were attempting to put some distance between themselves and the Taraki-Amin regime.

The first of the exploratory visits by senior Soviet officials occurred when General Andrei Yerishev, who was in charge of ideology, morale, and discipline in the Soviet armed forces, arrived during the spring of 1979. His visit followed the delivery of new and more sophisticated weapons to the Afghan army.

There are some indications that during the spring of 1979 Soviet enthusiasm for Amin had begun to wane. His seizure of power, when it occurred, did not, in the Soviet view, further their objectives.

The Soviets sent in a new man, V.S. Safrorchuk, to help get the situation under control. He attempted to persuade the Afghan leadership to adopt more palatable and conciliatory public positions on matters that had heretofore alienated the people. He pressed the Afghans to broaden the government by including non-Communists and Parchamists. This advice presumably fell on deaf ears. By July it was evident that the Soviets were seeking an alternative to Amin.

The US embassy reported, "We frequently hear rumors that the Soviets are still trying to build a new regime."

Two more army mutinies occurred, one in Jalalabad in June 1979 and a second in Kabul on 5 August 1979.

General Ivan C. Pavlovsky, Commander, Soviet Ground Forces, arrived in Kabul in August 1979 with a large group of Soviet specialists. The team members spread out through the country to gather firsthand information on the situation. Based on the

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conclusions of this team, the Soviets finalized their plans for future action.

Certainly, by the end of Pavlovsky's visit, we must conclude that the Soviets had firmly decided to get rid of Amin and to install Babrak Karmal to head the new puppet regime.

To indicate how intricate were the plots, counterplots and sheer treachery pursued by all participants, President Taraki was in Havana on 5 September 1979 making a lengthy speech to the nonaligned conference praising his own government and the Soviet Union. He flew back to Kabul via Moscow. There he had conversations with Brezhnev and Gromyko in which we must assume both agreed that Amin had to go. Taraki returned to Kabul on 11 September to an effusive welcome. The foreign minister, Shah Wali, who had accompanied Taraki to Havana and presumably learned of the dump Amin agreement, is generally considered to have been the source of warnings to Amin that his services were to be terminated.

On 14 September 1979, Radio Kabul announced that cabinet changes had been made with Taraki's approval. There are no trustworthy accounts of what transpired that day but the day ended with Taraki as Amin's prisoner. One account of the events suggests that Taraki summoned Amin to a meeting on the morning of the 14th. Amin feared a trap but was reassured by Soviet Ambassador Puzanov that it was safe to go. Amin, however, took an armed escort. On entering the building where Taraki lived, he was fired upon. One of his escorts was killed, but Amin withdrew uninjured, rounded up a small military force, and counter-attacked, taking Taraki into custody.

On 16 September 1979 Kabul Radio announced that Taraki had requested that he be relieved of his duties due to ill health. In his place Amin was appointed Secretary General of the PDPA. On 10 October 1979 the Kabul Times published a report that Taraki had died of serious illness. In actuality he was strangled on the orders of Amin.

Meanwhile, the US Intelligence Community was striving to make sense out of these bizarre events or, more accurately, to make sense out of the information that escaped the secrecy barriers maintained so diligently by the Soviets and the Afghans.

A National Foreign Assessment Center Memorandum of 17 August 1979 reaffirmed the outlook for the Afghan government was bleak, estimated the Soviets would increase their advisory presence, did not rule out that the Soviets would attempt to install a new government or qualitatively change the nature of their military involvement. The memo hedged by stating:

The pitfalls of even a limited military operation to bolster a pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan are tremendous, and it is quite conceivable that in the end Moscow will let Taraki and Amin fall and try to form a new government with old friends from the previous regime.

On 14 September 1979, Admiral Turner sent a memo to the National Security Council stating:

The Soviet leaders may be on the threshhold of a decision to commit their own forces to prevent the collapse of the Taraki regime and protect their sizable stake in Afghanistan. Small Soviet combat units may have already arrived in the country.

This last sentence is interesting because a dispute was going on between the Office of Imagery Analysis and the Soviet political analysts over the interpretation of photo coverage at Bagram Airfield. The imagery people identified an airborne infantry battalion on the airfield in early September 1979. The Soviet political analysts would not accept this interpretation and, according to my information, Admiral Turner was briefed and decided the evidence was insufficient for a firm identification until Humint or some other corroboration was received. An Imagery Analysis memo was published on 21 September 1979, stating, "A Soviet probable airborne infantry batallion is located at Bagram airfield." It was later determined that the Soviet airborne battalion had been at Bagram since June.

On 20 September 1979, Admiral Turner wrote a memo for the record of his conversation with Dr. Brzezinski in which he suggested the need for a Presidential Review Committee meeting to discuss US reacton in the event of a Soviet move into Afghanistan.

On 28 September 1979, an IIM, "Soviet Options in Afghanistan," noted the increased readiness posture of the airborne forces in the Turkestan Military District and speculated that in the event of a breakdown of control in Kabul, the Soviets would be likely to deploy one or more Soviet airborne divisions to the Kabul vicinity to protect Soviet citizens as well as to ensure continuance of some pro-Soviet regime in the capital. The memo included a caveat:

We do not believe Moscow would intend such a deployment for use in fighting against the

Muslim insurgency although once in Afghanistan, such Soviet airborne forces could eventually be drawn into such fighting. We have not seen indications that the Soviets are at the moment preparing ground forces for large-scale military intervention in Afghanistan.

The first overt indications of a Soviet contingency plan for massive intervention began to surface in October 1979, when members of the Soviet Army Reserve in Central Asia began to be called to active duty.

A memo prepared by the Office of Strategic Research on 22 October 1979 estimated there were 3,500 to 4,000 Soviet military personnel in Afghanistan and speculated that Soviet pilots were flying the helicopter gunships.

A 25 October 1979 memorandum for the Director of the National Foreign Assessment Center outlined a contingency plan for the formation of a Special Task Force on Afghanistan to be manned by personnel from the Office of Strategic Research and the Office of Political Analysis. Obviously, the Intelligence Community had accepted the possibility of major changes in the Afghan situation and was organizationally preparing to monitor events as they developed.

The Soviet press, as the autumn turned to winter, developed an ever cooler approach to Amin. On 4 December 1979, the eve of the anniversary of the Soviet-Afghan Friendship Treaty, the congratulatory message from Brezhnev and Kosygin conveyed congratulations and friendly wishes to the PDPA and the friendly Afghan people. The usual Soviet buzz words of personal esteem to leaders of friendly nations who remained in good standing in the Kremlin were entirely absent. Amin on the contrary sent an effusive message to his dear comrades--esteemed comrades--personally wishing them health and new successes.

A few weeks later Soviet troops were successful in overrunning his country and killing him.

The Soviets Build Up

A 12 December 1979 internal memo drafted in OSR provided an unclassified statement detailing the known extent of Soviet presence in Afghanistan. It was estimated that there were 5,000 men in the country, with 1,000 in combat units, and that heavy Soviet air transports were continuing to land at Bagram, indicating the build-up was continuing.

Also on 12 December 1979, an NFAC memo prepared by OPA provided an historical view of the relations between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, beginning with the years before the October Revolution in 1917 and continuing to the present. The memo did not speculate on future developments but gave a well-balanced summary of the events which led up to the continuing crisis.

On 14 December 1979, NFAC published a Spot Commentary identifying a new Soviet command post on the Afghan border.

An NFAC Spot Commentary on 15 December 1979 detailed the accelerating build-up of Soviet forces opposite Afghanistan and bluntly stated that Moscow might be in the early stages of mounting major operations.

Further indications of Soviet preparations for intervention appeared 16 December 1979. A Spot Commentary, "USSR-Afghanistan: Soviet Buildup," detailed the departure of units of the 105th Guards Airborne Division from garrison and identified a second airborne battalion at Bagram airfield in Afghanistan. In addition to the airborne units, the Commentary identified a motorized rifle division at Samarkand as in the process of being mobilized and noted the absence of the military rifle divisions at Termez and Kushka from their normal garrison locations. The Commentary also described the deployment of 45 SU-17 Fitter fighter-bombers to the Turkestan Military District and identified a high level field headquarters near Termez as the probable supervising Headquarters.

The report described the Afghan army as deteriorating and the insurgents' pressure as increasing.

On 19 December 1979, Admiral Turner signed a memorandum to the NSC, "USSR-Afghanistan," in which he accepted the location of the airborne battalions at Bagram and specified they were capable of conducting multibattalion combat operations. He concluded the USSR "may be positioning themselves in a deliberate manner to escalate further should circumstances require." He, however, hedged:

While the Soviets may now be less concerned about the adverse consequences for their relations with the US of a major intervention in Afghanistan, they probably also wish to avoid deflecting unto themselves any of the militant Islamic hostility now directed at the United States.

The Intelligence Community had picked up and identified the indications for the final preparations of a multidivisional massive ground combat invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, but it was unable to divest itself of the conventional wisdom that they would, at the final moment, shrink from such a major escalation of Soviet involvement in Afghan affairs.

An Alert Memorandum published on 19 December 1979 spelled out in greater detail the nature of the forces recently introduced into Afghanistan and described the growing Soviet buildup near the Afghan border.

The skeptics of Soviet intervention were still able to insert a qualifier:

At a minimum the Soviets have now established a capability to defend Bagram as an airhead. They could hold other key points, engage insurgents in selected provinces, or free Afghan army units for operations elsewhere if they introduced forces of the size now being built up near the border. To conduct extensive anti-insurgent operations on a countrywide scale would require mobilization and commitment of much larger numbers of regular ground forces drawn from other military districts in a potentially open-ended operation.

On 25 December 1979 a Spot Commentary stated: "The Soviets have apparently completed their preparations for a major intervention in Afghanistan, and they may have started to move into that country in force today."

The report briefly described the air movement of troops and equipment, including artillery, from the Western USSR to Turkestan and Central Asian military districts on 24 December 1979. The report continued to specify the early morning flights of a large number of AN-22 heavy transports--probably carrying troops and equipment from Fergana toward the Afghan border.

On 26 December 1979, an NFAC memo, "Capabilities and Requirements of the Afghan Insurgents," estimated that the insurgents "would be unlikely to survive concentrated counterinsurgency operations conducted by Soviet troops."

Another interesting NFAC memo, dated 26 December 1979, was a "tour d' horizon" of Southwest Asia. In summary the memo stated, "The Soviets seem committed to maintain the Afgan regime--even at the cost of direct intervention."

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On 27 December 1979, a Spot Commentary gave a status report of the recent events and detailed a coup led by Babrak Karmal, and reported Soviet troops and their Afghan supporters were in control of Radio Afghanistan.

On 29 December 1979, NFAC stated, "We have strong circumstantial evidence this morning that the Soviets have sent the motorized rifle division from Termez into Afghanistan." The report estimated the total number of Soviet combat troops in country at 20,000. In addition, it was estimated the Soviets had about 3,500 military advisers and technicians in country.

The report speculated that an additional motorized rifle division from Kushka had been fully mobilized and was probably moving toward Hurat, while a third division had departed its garrison areas on 28 December 1979 and was moving toward the border.

A Spot Commentary on 29 December 1979 described the disintegration of the Afghan army units in the Kabul area. The Commentary stated that the Soviets have occupied most important military bases in and around Kabul and, with Parchamist irregulars, were guarding most important government buildings.

A memo dated 30 December 1979, "Afghanistan: The Babrak Government," outlined the composition and background of the recently installed regime.

In Retrospect

The story of how the Soviets planned and carried out both the destruction of the Amin government and the invasion is a case study in thorough planning, the use of surprise, mass and boldness in execution topped off by treachery and a cynical campaign of official disinformation that has seldom been equalled in history.

Babrak, who had been fired by Amin as Afghan ambassador to Czechoslovakia, was maintained by the Soviets in exile in Czechoslovakia until he was needed to head a new more subservient regime. His movements are obscure.

The most likely explanation was that Babrak was flown into Afghanistan and secreted in the Soviet Embassy prior to the assassination of Amin.

The Soviets probably made the final decisions to execute their invasion plans prior to the meeting on 27 November 1979 of the Central Committee in Moscow. The Politburo group likely to

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have decided the issue was headed by Brezhnev and included Andropov, Gromyko, Kosygin, Suslov, and Ustinov.

The actual plan provided for pre-invasion introduction of Soviet combat forces into Kabul and to secure critical points along the main invasion routes, a thorough cover and deception plan which involved disarming Afghan units, a banquet for all armored officers which isolated them from any contact with their troops, an explosion which knocked out the Kabul telephone system, the seizure of the Kabul broadcast facilities, the Interior Ministry, Amin's headquarters in the Darulaman Palace, overriding the Kabul broadcasting facilities program with Soviet-prepared false Afghan government announcements, and so forth.

It would appear that Amin and his guards fought desperately. It was not a surgical operation. It was on the contrary a sledge hammer blow.

The following morning, after the Soviet airborne units had tidied up in Kabul, two motorized rifle divisions began crossing the Amudarya on pontoon bridges.

The Soviets began the difficult task of convincing the world that the government of Afghanistan whose head they had just assassinated had in fact requested their intervention.

On 17 November 1980, an IIM, "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: Implications for Warning," was published. This IIM was a lengthy and detailed analysis of the performance of the US Warning System and the identification of the lessons learned as a result of the invasion.

The report concluded that the system worked, that the US collection system was equal to the task of providing analysts with sufficiently detailed, accurate, and timely data to allow them to reach essentially correct conclusions.

The Key Judgments concluded:

The Intelligence Community's analysts met their basic responsibility in a situation of this sort by providing sufficient prior reporting to assure that no key policymaker should have been surprised by the invasion. The analysts were unable to forecast precisely the time or the size of the Soviets' move, but gave warning at least 10 days beforehand that the USSR was prepared to invade.

The problems of intelligence collection in Afghanistan are great, perhaps as severe as any we have faced in recent years. Language, distance, lack of domestic infrastructure, a territory contiguous to the Soviet Union, a tradition of native hostility to all foreigners, and mutual suspicion among the Afghan tribes all combine to make the collection of intelligence an extremely difficult task. Under the circumstances a fair judgment would give the community a "well done."

On evaluation I would conclude that the Community was reluctant to accept the indications that the Soviet Union would undertake whatever steps were necessary to maintain a cooperative, friendly, communist regime in Afghanistan.

I would pick the week of 15 September 1979 as the turning point in the Intelligence Community's evaluation of Soviet intentions. It was during this week that the dispute between the imagery people and the SOVA experts landed in the DCI's office. Whatever his decision at the moment on the official recognition of a combat unit in country, the DCI's subsequent personal initiatives with Dr. Brzezinski, the President, etc., highlighted the developing possibility that the Soviets would intervene with combat forces. The careful wording of the various advisories which up until early September 1979 stated "could not rule out the possibility," etc., gradually gave way on 25 December 1979 to the forthright "may already have started to move into that company in force today." The major mass cross border operation actually began on the 29th of December.

The key, of course, was the identification of a combat unit, an airborne battalion, at Bagram in September. When confirmed it was a firm indicator that the Soviets would utilize Soviet ground combat troops in direct combat operations inside Afghanistan to accomplish their objectives.

No policymaker in the US Government should have been surprised when the actual cross-border operation began in late December.

The DCI's personal initiatives with the Director of the NSC staff and the President and the establishment of a contingency crisis management group all reflect an excellent performance in maintaining a free flow of intelligence to those with a need to know.